

FRECKLES

By
Gene Stratton-
PorterCOPYRIGHT, 1904, BY DOUBLEDAY,
PAGE & CO.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ANGEL'S GLAD STORY.

The Chicago address was suit 11, Auditorium. She laid her hand on her driver's sleeve. "There's a fast driving limit!" she asked.

"Yes, miss."

"Will you crowd it all you can without danger of arrest? I will pay well. I must catch some people!"

Then she smiled at him. The hospital, an orphan's home, and the Auditorium seemed a queer combination to that driver, but the angel was always everywhere, and he was sure to be there.

"I will get you there just as quickly as any man could with a team," he said promptly.

She clung to the card and paper, and, as best she could in the hurrying, swaying cab, read the addresses over.

"O'More, suite eleven, Auditorium."

"O'More," she repeated. "Seems to fit Freckles to a dot. Wonder if that could be his name? Suite eleven means that you are pretty well fixed. Suites in the Auditorium come high."

Then she turned the card and read on its reverse, Lord Maxwell O'More, M. P. Kilbany place, County Clare, Ireland.

"A lord man!" she groaned despairingly. "A lord man! But my hoe cake's scorched!"

She blinked back the tears and, spreading the paper on her knee, read: "After three months' fruitless search, Lord O'More gives up the quest for his lost nephew, and leaves Chicago today for his home in Ireland."

She read on, and realized every word of it. The likeness settled in. It was Freckles over again, only older and elegantly dressed. There was not a change to doubt.

"Thank you, and wait, no matter how long," she said to her driver.

Catching up the paper, she hurried to the desk and laid down Lord O'More's card.

"Has my uncle started yet?" she asked, sweetly.

The surprised clerk stepped back on a belloy, and covertly kicked him for being in the way.

"His lordship is in his room," he said, with a low bow.

The clerk showed the belloy toward the angel.

"Show her ladyship to the elevator and Lord O'More's suit," he said, bowing double.

At the belloy's tap the door swung open, and the liveried servant thrust a card tray before the angel. The shining of the door created a current that carried a curtain aside, and in an adjoining room, lounging in a great chair, with a paper in his hand, sat the man who was, beyond question, of Freckles' blood and race.

With perfect control the angel dropped Lord O'More's card on the tray, whipped past his servant and stood before his lordship.

"Good morning," she said with easy politeness.

Lord O'More glanced her over with amused curiosity until her color began to deepen and her blood to run hotly.

"Well, my dear," he said at last, "how can I serve you?"

Instantly the angel smiled. She had been so shielded in the midst of almost entire freedom, owing to the circumstances of her life, that the words and the look appealed to her as almost insulting. She lifted her head with a proud gesture.

"I am not your dear," she said, with slow distinctness. "There isn't a thing in the world you can do for me. I came here to see if I could do something—a very great something—for you; but if I don't like you I won't do it!"

There was a silken rustle and a beautiful woman with cheeks of cherry bloom, hair of jet and eyes of pure Irish blue, moved to Lord O'More's side, and, catching his arm, shook him impatiently.

"Terence! Have you lost your senses?" she cried. "Didn't you understand what the child said? Look at her face! See what she has!"

"I beg your pardon," he said. "The fact is, I am leaving Chicago sorely disappointed. It makes me bitter and reckless. I thought it was some more of those queer, useless people that have thrust themselves on me constantly, and I was careless. Forgive me and tell me why you came."

"I will if I like you," said the angel stoutly, "and if I don't I won't!"

"But I know all wrong, and now I don't know how to make you like me," said his lordship, with sincere penitence in his tone.

The angel looked into the beautiful woman's face.

"Are you his wife?" she asked.

"Yes," said the woman, "I am his wife."

"Well," said the angel judicially, "the Bird Woman says no one in the whole world knows all a man's big secrets and all his littlenesses as his wife does. What you think of him ought to do for me. Do you like him?"

"Better than any one in the whole world," said Lady O'More promptly.

The angel smiled a second, and then her legal tussle came to the fore again.

"Yes, but have you any one you could like better if he wasn't all right?" she persisted.

"I have three of his sons, two little daughters, a father, mother and several brothers and sisters," came the quick reply.

"And you like him best?" persisted the angel with finality.

"I love him so much that I would give up every one of them with dry eyes, if by so doing I could save him,"

said Lord O'More's wife. "Oh, my!" She lifted her clear eyes to Lord O'More's and shook her head. "She never, never could do that!" she said. "But it's a mighty big thing to your credit that she thinks she could. I guess I'll tell you why I came."

She laid down the paper and touched the portrait.

"When you were just a boy, did people call you Freckles?" she asked.

"Dozens of good fellows all over Ireland and the continent are doing it today," answered Lord O'More.

The angel's face lighted with her most beautiful smile.

"I was sure of it," she said winningly. "That's what we call him, and he is so like you. I doubt if any one of those three boys of yours are more so. But it's been twenty years. Seems to me you've been a long time coming!"

Lord O'More caught the angel's wrists and his wife slipped her arms about her.

"Steady, my girl!" said the man's voice hoarsely. "Don't make me think you've brought word of the boy at this late hour unless you know surely."

"It's all right," said the angel. "We have him, and there's no chance of a mistake. If I hadn't gone to that home for his little clothes and heard of you, and been hunting you and had met you on the street, or anywhere, I should have stopped you and asked you who you were just because you are so like him. It's all right. I can tell you where Freckles is; but whether you deserve to know—that's another matter."

Lord O'More did not hear her. He dropped back in his chair and, covering his face, burst into those terrible sobs that shake and rend a strong man. Lady O'More hovered over him, weeping.

"Emph! Looks pretty fair for Freckles," muttered the angel. "Lots of things can be explained. Now perhaps they can explain this."

"They did explain so fully that in a few minutes the angel was on her feet, hurrying Lord and Lady O'More to reach the hospital."

"You said Freckles' old nurse knew his mother's picture instantly," said the angel. "I want that picture and the bundle of little clothes."

Lady O'More gave them into her hands.

The likeness was a large miniature painted on ivory, with a frame of beaten gold, and the face that looked out of it was of extreme beauty and surpassing sweetness. Surrounded by masses of dark hair was a delicately cut face, with big eyes. In the upper part of it there was no trace of

Freckles, but the lips curving in a smile were his very own. The angel gazed as if she could never leave off. Then with a quivering breath she laid the portrait aside and reached both arms for Lord O'More's neck.

"That will save Freckles' life and insure his happiness," she said positively. "Thank you, oh, thank you for coming!"

She kissed and hugged him and then the wife who had come with him. She opened the bundle of yellow and brown linen and gave just a glance at the texture and work. Then she gathered the little clothes and the picture to her heart and led the way to the cab.

Ushering Lord and Lady O'More into the reception room, she said to McLean, "Please go call up my father and ask him to come on the first train."

She swung the door after him.

"These are Freckles' people," she said to the Bird Woman. "You can find out about each other. I'm going to him."

And she was gone.

The nurse left the room quietly as the angel entered, still carrying the bundle and the picture. When they were alone the angel turned to Freckles and saw that the crisis was, indeed, at hand.

"Angel," he panted. "Oh, angel! Did you get them? Are they white? Are the little stitches there? Oh, angel! Did my mother love me?"

The words seemed to leap from his burning lips. The angel dropped the bundle on the bed and laid the picture, face down, across his knees. She gently pushed his head to the pillow and caught his arms in a firm grasp.

"Yes, dear heart," she said with fullest assurance. "No little clothes were ever whiter. I never in all my life saw such dainty, little stitches, and, as for loving you, no boy's mother ever loved him more!"

A great trembling seized Freckles.

"Sure? Are you sure?" he urged, with clinging teeth.

"I know," said the angel firmly. "And, Freckles, while you rest and be glad I want to tell you a little story. When you feel stronger you will look at the clothes together. They are here. They are all right. But when I was at the home getting them I heard of some people that were hunting a lost boy. I went to see them, and what they told me was all so exactly like what might have happened to you that I must tell you. Then you'll see that things could be very different from what you have always tortured yourself with thinking."

Freckles lay quiet under her touch, but he did not hear a word that she was saying until his roving eyes rested on her face; and he immediately noticed a remarkable thing. For the first time she was talking to him and doing everything but meet his eyes. That was not like the angel at all. It was the delight of hearing her speak that she always looked on squarely in the face and with perfect frankness.

"—and he was a sour, grumpy old man," she was saying. "He always had been spoiled, because he was an only son and had a title and a big estate. He would have just his way, no matter about his sweet little wife, or his boys, or any one. So when his oldest son fell in love with a beautiful girl with a title, the very girl of all the world his father wanted him to, and added a big adjoining estate to his, why, that pleased him mightily."

"Then he went and ordered his oldest son to marry a poky kind of a girl that nobody liked to get another big estate on the other side, and that

was different. That was all the world different, because the eldest son had been in love all his life with the girl he married, and, oh, Freckles, it's no wonder, for I saw her! She's a royal beauty and she has the sweetest way about her that you ever saw. But that poor younger son, he had been in love with the village vicar's daughter all his life. That's no wonder either, for she was more beautiful yet. She could sing like the angels, but she hadn't a cent. She loved him to death, too, if he was bony and freckled and red haired—I don't mean that! They didn't say what color his hair was, but his father's must have been the reddest ever, for when he found out about them, and it wasn't anything so terrible, he just cried!"

"The old man went to see the girl—the pretty one with no money, of course—and he hurt her feelings until she ran away. She went over to London and began studying music. Soon she grew to be a lovely singer, and then she joined a company and came to this country."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THREE GUESTS.

WHEN the younger son found that she had left London, he ran off and followed her," continued the angel. Freckles was listening most attentively now. "When she got here all alone and afraid," the angel went on, "and saw him coming to her, why, she was so glad she up and married him, just like anybody else would have done. He didn't want her to travel with the troupe, so when they got to Chicago they thought that would be a good place, and they stopped, and he hunted work. It was slow business, because he had never been taught to do a useful thing, and he didn't even know how to hunt work, least of all to do it when he found it; so pretty soon things were going wrong. But if he couldn't find work, she could always sing, so she sang at night, and made little things in the daytime. He didn't like her to sing in public, and he wouldn't let her when he could help himself, but winter came, it was very cold, and fire was expensive. Rents went up, and they had to move farther out to cheaper and cheaper places; and you were coming—"

I mean, the boy that is lost was coming—and they were almost distracted. Then the man wrote and told his father all about it, and his father sent the letter back unopened and wrote him to never write again."

"When the baby came, there was a mighty little left to pawn for food and a doctor, and nothing at all for a nurse. So an old neighbor woman went in and took care of the young mother and the little baby, just because she was so sorry for them. By that time they were sorry out in the suburbs on the top floor of a little wooden house, among a lot of factories, and it kept getting colder, with less to eat. Then the man got desperate, and he went out to just find something to eat; and the woman was desperate, too. She got up, left the old woman to take care of her baby and went into the city to sing for some money. The woman got so cold she put the baby in bed and went home. Then a better blow up in a factory beside the little house and set it on fire. A piece of iron was pitched across the little house and broke through the roof. It came down smash, and cut just one little hand off the poor baby. It screamed and screamed, and the fire kept coming closer and closer."

"The old woman ran out with the rest of the people and saw what had happened. She knew there wasn't going to be time to wait for the firemen or anything, and she ran into the building. She could hear the poor little baby screaming, and she couldn't stand that, so she worked her way up to it. There it was, all hurt and bleeding. Then she was scared almost to death over thinking what its mother would do to her for going off and leaving it, so she ran to a home for little friendless babies that was near and banged on the door. Then she hid across the street until the baby was taken in, and then she ran back to see if her own house was burning up."

The factory and the little house and a lot of others were all gone. The people there told her that the beautiful lady came back and ran into the house to find her baby. She had just gone in when her husband came, and he went in after her, and the house went down over both of them."

She closed his fingers over the slip and straightened his hair.

"Now you are all right, dear Limberlost guard," she said. "You go to sleep and don't think of a thing but just pure joy, joy, joy! I'll keep your people until you wake up!"

Freckles caught a gasp as she turned from him.

"I'll go to sleep in five minutes," he said, "if you will be doing just one thing more for me. Send for my father. Oh, angel, send for him quick!"

One instant the angel stood looking down on him. The next a crimson wave darkly stained her lovely face. Her chin began a spasmodic quivering and tears sprang into her eyes. Her hands caught at her chest as if she were stifling. Freckles' grasp on her tightened until he drew her up to and then down beside him. He slipped his arm about her and drew her face to his pillow.

"Don't angel; for the love of mercy don't be doing that," he implored. "I can't be bearing it. Tell me. You must tell me!"

The angel shook her head.

"That ain't fair, angel," said Freckles. "You made me tell you when it was like tearing the heart raw from me breast. And you was for making everything heaven-just heaven and nothing else for me. I'm so much more now than I was an hour ago, maybe I can be thinking of some way to fix things. You will be telling me?" he coaxed softly, moving his cheek against her hair.

The angel's head moved in negation. Freckles did a moment of intent thinking.

"Maybe I can be guessing," he whispered. "Will you be giving me three chances?"

There was just the faintest possible assent.

"You didn't want me to be knowing me name," guessed Freckles.

above him.

"How strong are you, dear heart?" he breathed. "How brave are you? Can you bear it? Dare I tell you that?"

"So?" gasped Freckles. "Not if you're sure! I can't bear it! I'll die if you do!"

The day had been an unrelenting strain with the angel. Nerve tension was drawn to the finest thread. It snapped suddenly.

"Die?" she flamed. "Die, if I tell you that! You said this morning that you would die if you didn't know your name, and if your people were honorable. Now I've gone and found you a name that stands for ages of honor, a mother that loved you enough to go into the fire and die for you, and the nicest kind of relatives, and you turn round and say you'll die over that! You just try dying and you'll get a good sleep!"

The angel stood glaring at him. One second Freckles lay paralyzed and dumb with astonishment. The next the Irish in his soul rose above everything. A roar of laughter burst from him. The terrified angel caught him in her arms and tried to stifle the sound. She implored and commanded. The tears rolled from Freckles' eyes and he wheeled on. When he was too worn out to utter another sound, his eyes laughed silently.

When he was quiet and rested the angel commenced talking to him softly.

"Dear Freckles," she was saying, "across your knees there is the face of the mother that went into the fire for you, and I know the name—old and full of honor—to which you were born. Dear heart, which will you have first?"

"Me mother!"

She lifted the lovely pictured face and set it in the nook of his arm. Freckles caught her hand and drew her down beside him, and together they gazed at the picture.

"Me mother! Oh, me mother! Can you ever be forgiving me? Oh, me beautiful little mother!" chanted Freckles over and over in exalted wonder.

"Wait!" cried the angel to the mate passion she could no more answer than he could ask. "Wait, I will write!"

She hurried to the table, caught up the nurse's pencil and on the back of

the angel's head moved in negation. Freckles did a moment of intent thinking.

"Maybe I can be guessing," he whispered. "Will you be giving me three chances?"

There was just the faintest possible assent.

"You didn't want me to be knowing me name," guessed Freckles.

above him.

"How strong are you, dear heart?" he breathed. "How brave are you? Can you bear it? Dare I tell you that?"

"So?" gasped Freckles. "Not if you're sure! I can't bear it! I'll die if you do!"

The day had been an unrelenting strain with the angel. Nerve tension was drawn to the finest thread. It snapped suddenly.

"Die?" she flamed. "Die, if I tell you that! You said this morning that you would die if you didn't know your name, and if your people were honorable. Now I've gone and found you a name that stands for ages of honor, a mother that loved you enough to go into the fire and die for you, and the nicest kind of relatives, and you turn round and say you'll die over that! You just try dying and you'll get a good sleep!"

The angel stood glaring at him. One second Freckles lay paralyzed and dumb with astonishment. The next the Irish in his soul rose above everything. A roar of laughter burst from him. The terrified angel caught him in her arms and tried to stifle the sound. She implored and commanded. The tears rolled from Freckles' eyes and he wheeled on. When he was too worn out to utter another sound, his eyes laughed silently.

When he was quiet and rested the angel commenced talking to him softly.

"Dear Freckles," she was saying, "across your knees there is the face of the mother that went into the fire for you, and I know the name—old and full of honor—to which you were born. Dear heart, which will you have first?"

"Me mother!"

She lifted the lovely pictured face and set it in the nook of his arm. Freckles caught her hand and drew her down beside him, and together they gazed at the picture.

"Me mother! Oh, me mother! Can you ever be forgiving me? Oh, me beautiful little mother!" chanted Freckles over and over in exalted wonder.

"Wait!" cried the angel to the mate passion she could no more answer than he could ask. "Wait, I will write!"

She hurried to the table, caught up the nurse's pencil and on the back of

the angel's head moved in negation. Freckles did a moment of intent thinking.

"Maybe I can be guessing," he whispered. "Will you be giving me three chances?"

There was just the faintest possible assent.

"You didn't want me to be knowing me name," guessed Freckles.

above him.

"How strong are you, dear heart?" he breathed. "How brave are you? Can you bear it? Dare I tell you that?"

"So?" gasped Freckles. "Not if you're sure! I can't bear it! I'll die if you do!"

The day had been an unrelenting strain with the angel. Nerve tension was drawn to the finest thread. It snapped suddenly.

"Die?" she flamed. "Die, if I tell you that! You said this morning that you would die if you didn't know your name, and if your people were honorable. Now I've gone and found you a name that stands for ages of honor, a mother that loved you enough to go into the fire and die for you, and the nicest kind of relatives, and you turn round and say you'll die over that! You just try dying and you'll get a good sleep!"

The angel stood glaring at him. One second Freckles lay paralyzed and dumb with astonishment. The next the Irish in his soul rose above everything. A roar of laughter burst from him. The terrified angel caught him in her arms and tried to stifle the sound. She implored and commanded. The tears rolled from Freckles' eyes and he wheeled on. When he was too worn out to utter another sound, his eyes laughed silently.

When he was quiet and rested the angel commenced talking to him softly.

"Dear Freckles," she was saying, "across your knees there is the face of the mother that went into the fire for you, and I know the name—old and full of honor—to which you were born. Dear heart, which will you have first?"

"Me mother!"

She lifted the lovely pictured face and set it in the nook of his arm. Freckles caught her hand and drew her down beside him, and together they gazed at the picture.

"Me mother! Oh, me mother! Can you ever be forgiving me? Oh, me beautiful little mother!" chanted Freckles over and over in exalted wonder.

"Wait!" cried the angel to the mate passion she could no more answer than he could ask. "Wait, I will write!"

She hurried to the table, caught up the nurse's pencil and on the back of

the angel's head moved in negation. Freckles did a moment of intent thinking.

"Maybe I can be guessing," he whispered. "Will you be giving me three chances?"

There was just the faintest possible assent.

"You didn't want me to be knowing me name," guessed Freckles.

PURE FOOD WILEY
RESIGNS POSITIONNoted Chemist of U. S. Department of Agriculture Will
Fight from the Ranks.

Washington, March 15.—Dr. Harvey Wiley left the laboratories of the bureau of chemistry tonight, where for nearly 25 years he had been chief chemist, no longer a government official but determined to change the course of pure food from the ranks of the people.

Friction with his superiors and irreconcilable differences of opinion as to the enforcement of the pure food and drugs act were the reasons given by Dr. Wiley for his resignation to Secretary Wilson of the department of agriculture.

Dr. Wiley will devote the remainder of his life, according to a statement issued by him to-day, to the "promotion of the principles of civic righteousness and industrial integrity which underlie the food and drugs act in the hope that it may be adopted by the people at large instead of the comparatively few mercenary manufacturers and dealers."

President Taft expressed regret at the resignation. Secretary Wilson said Dr. Wiley has been a "valuable man." Dr. Wiley in his statement said that he resigned for "the personal kindness and regard shown him" and likewise expressed his gratefulness to President Taft for his generous treatment of him in connection with alleged irregularities in employing Dr. H. H. Rusby of New York.

Dr. Wiley remarked, however, that though he was continued in his position after that incident he naturally expected that "those who had made false charges" would be dismissed.

ANTAGONIZED BY INTERESTS.—Dr. Wiley speaks in his statement of the "interests" which were found by him to be engaged in the manufacture of adulterated or adulterated foods and drugs.

"One by one," says Dr. Wiley, "I found that the activities pertaining to the bureau of chemistry were restricted and various forms of manipulated food products were withdrawn from its consideration and referred either to other bodies not contemplated by the law or directly relieved from further control."

"The official toleration and validation of such practices have restricted the activities of the bureau of chemistry to a mere nominal role as a result of which I have been instructed to refrain from stating in any public way my opinion regarding the effect of these substances upon health. This restriction has interfered with my academic freedom of speech on matters relating directly to the public welfare."

Dr. Wiley's statement expresses his disappointment that those who brought the charges of which he was exonerated last summer were not dismissed.

"I naturally expected that those who had made these false charges against me would no longer be continued in a position which would make a repetition of such action possible. The event, however, has not sustained my expectations in this matter. I was still left to come in daily contact with the men who secretly planned by destruction."

Dr. Wiley explained that while he did not determine to leave the government "I will not be a part of the machinery which is now being set on foot to suppress the truth."

For years there has been a feeling in his mind about the differences between his superiors and himself were irreconcilable, and that he had been "conscious of an official environment which was essentially inhospitable."

MAY GO ON LECTURE PLATFORM.—Dr. Wiley has not yet decided whether he will continue his fight for pure foods through the lecture field or as a writer or editor of household magazines.

Until his successor is chosen, Dr. R. H. Doolittle will act as chief of the bureau of chemistry.

Dr. Wiley's resignation came as a dramatic climax to a long conference he had with Secretary Wilson in the latter's private office today.

He entered the service of the government as chief chemist in 1883, serving in that capacity continuously ever since. Because of alleged technical irregularities in the employment of Dr. H. H. Rusby, Dr. Wiley was sometimes recommended for dismissal by Secretary Wilson. President Taft set the recommendations aside.

One rumor recently was that Dr. Wiley would enter political life and might become a candidate for vice-president on the democratic ticket. Dr. Wiley denied this with a laugh.